

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



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The Lamp Dispute

The Menorah was to be fashioned from one block of gold. But there is a Talmudic debate concerning the lamps which held the oil and wick: One opinion maintains that they were also to be hammered from the same material as the Menorah. Another opinion maintains that they were crafted independently and placed atop the frame of the Menorah when the time came for lighting. (Menachos 88b)

The dispute centers around the meaning of the verse, “He shall make it of a talent of pure gold, with all these implements.” (Shemos 25:39) Both disputants assume that anything included in the “talent of gold” must be fashioned from one piece of gold in that weight, per the Torah’s earlier instruction, “the menorah shall be made of hammered work.” (Ibid, 25:31) Therefore,

whether or not the lamps are included in the “talent” determines if they are to be made separately or not.

The first opinion maintains that “all these implements” refers to the lamps — they, too, are to be made from the “talent of pure gold,” and therefore must be part of the Menorah frame itself. The second opinion maintains that only “it,” the Menorah itself, is made “of a talent of gold,” the implements, however, are made from other pieces of gold, and not fashioned from the same block as the Menorah.

Rashi’s Ambiguity:

Rashi avoids the issue entirely by explaining that “all these implements” includes not only the lamps but also the tongs and scoops. These were obviously made from separate material than the Menorah frame. Therefore, Rashi clearly does not see the “talent of gold” as referring to the block that must be hammered into the shape of the Menorah, but rather as the total weight

of gold that is to be used for the entire project.

It follows that from Rashi's commentary it is inconclusive if the lamps were made from the same piece of gold as the frame or not.

If Rashi does not clearly settle this question, it must be that the answer is evident from a straightforward reading of the verse, and does not warrant Rashi's intervention.

The Explanation:

The instructions for the Menorah's construction proceed as follows:

In verse 31 the Torah commands, "And you shall make a menorah of pure gold. The menorah shall be made of hammered work; its base and its stem, its goblets, its knobs, and its flowers shall [all] be [one piece] with it."

Verses 32-35 describe these ornaments. Verse 36 concludes: "Their knobs and their branches shall [all] be [one piece] with it; all of it [shall be] one hammered mass of pure gold."

Verse 37-38 introduces the lamps and the other implements: "And you shall make its lamps seven, and he shall kindle its lamps [so that they] shed light toward its face. And its tongs and its scoops [shall be] of pure gold."

Clearly, the progression indicates that only the frame and the ornaments are

hammered from one piece of gold, while the lamps, tongs, and scoop were made individually from gold.

Therefore, Rashi does not need to comment with his stance on the Talmudic dispute, because the verses are unambiguous.

Shedding Light on Later Comments:

In Parshas Vayakhel, where the Torah narrates how the people built the Mishkan according to the instructions laid out in our Parshah, Rashi comments on the building of the Menorah:

"And the menorah for lighting and its implements and its lamps, and the oil for lighting (Shemos, 35:14)."

And its implements — Its tongs and its scoops.

Its lamps — Ses luzes, lozes in Old French, spoons in which the oil and the wicks are placed.

And the oil for lighting — That too required wise-hearted [people] because it was different from other oils...

There are two glaring questions here:

1. Why does Rashi offer a French translation and explanation for the word "lamps" here but not earlier, in our context?
2. Why, in his citations for his commentary, does Rashi include the prefix "and" in the

first and last quotes, but emits it from the phrase, “and its lamps”?

Based on the above, that Rashi maintains that the lamps were made separately from the Menorah itself, we can explain the following: When our verse says “He shall make it of a talent of pure gold, with all these implements” the lamps as included with the other vessels. But this verse separates the lamps from the other implements, “the menorah for lighting and its implements and its lamps.” This implies that the lamps are not included in the category of implements. Rashi therefore

emits the word “and” from his citation to clarify that the verse should be read to say, “the menorah for lighting and its implements, i.e., its lamps.”

And to explain why the verse does indeed single out the lamps here, Rashi offers the French translation which renders the word as a “light” giving instrument. Because the function of the Menorah is to give light, the lamps are essentially the main part of the Menorah, and are therefore listed separately even though they are made individually, like the other implements.
